

THINGOE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
(WEST SUFFOLK)



ANNUAL REPORT

of the

CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR

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PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

Councillor N.H.H. Nichols - CHAIRMAN

Councillor J. H. Warren - VICE CHAIRMAN

COUNCILLORS

Mr. B. Budnik
Mr. H.H. Cawston
Mrs. J.A. Childs
Mr. C.W.G. Hatten
Mr. A.R. Jones
Mr. T.T.F. May
Mrs. K.M. Laing
Mr. M.J. Milburn

Mr. W.R. Mizen
Mr. K.M. Spence
Mr. S.T. Thurlow
Mr. N.R. Whitwell
Mr. C. Winsor
Mr. L. Wright
Vacancy.

THE STAFF OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

ACTING MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

D. G. H. PATEY, M.A., B.M., B.Ch., M.F.C.M., D.P.H.

CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR

F. HOLMES, F.A.P.H.I.

Meat and Other Foods Certificate R.S.H.

Dip. (Hons.) R.I.P.H. AND H.

This Officer is also appointed Inspector under the Petroleum and Explosives Acts.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTORS

S.T. AARON, M.A.P.H.I.,

Meat and Other Foods Certificate R.S.H.

Smoke Inspector's Certificate R.S.H.

Sanitary Science as applied to Building and Public Works Certificate R.S.H.

Tropical Hygiene Certificate R.S.H.

C.P. RAMPLING, M.A.P.H.I.

Dip. P.H.I.E.B.

CLERK/TYPIST

MRS J.E. HAWKINS

RODENT OPERATOR

C.H.W. HOLDEN

I N T R O D U C T I O N

This is the last report which will be presented to the Thingoe Rural District Council. It has been produced at a time when all the staff are involved in the intricacies of re-organisation, a remoulding of policies, a merging of staffs and preparing to face all the new problems which will face us. I would like to pay very special tribute to all the staff for maintaining the standards under such difficult pressures and taking many of the responsibilities from my shoulders whilst I have been involved with the affairs of St. Edmundsbury.

I am pleased indeed to be able to tell you that the same staff will continue to serve the area after 1st April. They, and I, hope that the existing councillors, the new councillors representing the area - and the public at large - will continue to come to us with their problems. I can assure them that they will receive the same personal attention that they have had in the past.

We appreciate the courtesy, help and consideration extended to us throughout this final year by all members of the Council and the members of the Health and Housing Committees in particular. It has been our privilege to serve.

New Legislation.

1. The Local Government Act 1972 - has had its major influence in this year and despite the fact that the post of public health inspector will no longer be a statutory one the Baines Committee and the new Council accepted the importance of the work done and there will be an Environmental Health Department staffed with public health inspectors with appropriate support staff.

2. The Land Compensation Act 1973. - This Act which had little publicity made two vital changes which affected the Department. The first was to put a legal obligation on the Council to rehouse persons from properties with Orders on under the Housing Act 1957. The second was to require the Council to make "home loss" payments to those vacating such properties. The total value of payments due during the first year of operation was just on £4,000. - a figure not allowed for in original estimates due to a lack of prior knowledge.

3. Other Acts which received assent and which affected the work of the Department included:-

The Counter Inflation Act 1973.

The National Health Service Reorganisation Act, 1973

The Fair Trading Act, 1973

The Water Act, 1973

The Breeding of Dogs Act, 1973.

1. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

A. Unfit Housing

38 properties were represented as unfit resulting in the following action:-

Closing Orders	16
Demolition Orders	9
Not determined	13

B. Demolition and Closure

Properties demolished	11
" vacated and closed	26

C. Reconstruction and Repair

This was the most satisfying work as it helped to retain or add to the housing stock.

Properties reconstructed - subject to Closing Orders	6
" " " " Demolition Orders	6
Other properties repaired by formal or informal action	26.

D. Rehousing

Number of persons displaced from properties subject to Orders	56.
Number of families involved	25.

E. Overcrowding

No new cases of statutory overcrowding were recorded.

F. Improvement Grants

Whilst the number of enquiries remained high the number of grants applied for fell from 80 to 60, but the number of completions rose considerably.

Fewer applications for second homes were made, but a high proportion of enquiries were for grants to carry out work not grant aidable. These were for enlargement or further improvement. Some second Improvement Grants were made to insert damp proof courses where central heating had resulted in previously insignificant dampness becoming a major defect.

	<u>Standard Grants</u>	<u>Discretionary Grants</u>
Approved	18 (32)	42 (48)
Completed	25 (29)	43 (27)

(Last years figures in brackets).

Two significant factors were (1) the difficulty experienced by applicants to obtain competitive - and sometimes any - tenders for work and (2) The length of time taken to complete works. An extension of permitted time was asked for so frequently that the basic allowed time was increased from 12 to 24 months.

G. Formal requests for improvements. Sec. 19 Housing Act 1964

Despite several enquiries no applications were received. This section has proved totally ineffective and will make no contribution to the effort. It is now clear that the legislation should be based on the Time and Place procedure for unfit dwellings. The two outstanding cases where notices had previously been served were completed.

H. New Building

The trends indicated last year continued and new dwellings completed were still showing a downward trend.

	<u>Council</u>	<u>Private</u>
New properties completed	50	300

Qualification Certificates.

Eight applications for Certificates were received and six issued. Two were refused due to unabated defects.

Residential Caravans.

Although no increase in licenced sites took place the total number of occupied vans increased by 64 to 211. This was due to an enlargement of an existing site to accommodate twin units to be sited by a development company which purchased the largest of our sites in the year.

Nature of Use	Sites	Vans
Private Residential	32	211
Local Authority Residential	1	18
Agricultural Workers (seasonal)(est.)	18	43
Showman's Guild (seasonal)	3	9
Incidental to dwelling	18	18
Holiday and touring	1	60

2. Air.

No cases of pollution required formal action, but this year stubble burning certainly earned much concern. Traffic was caused to proceed with caution due to visibility restriction in several cases, but in two cases reports claimed that cars had to accelerate through areas of intense heat felt by the drivers through closed windows.

Applicants for prior approval of furnaces and chimney heights were extremely co-operative and after minor changes in some cases the following applications were approved:-

Furnaces approved	7
Chimney heights approved	4

3. Water.

No complaints of mains water were received and the West Suffolk Water Board provide their own report. Private supplies were generally satisfactory, but the low rainfall could lead to problems next year as the indications are that ground water levels have dropped seriously.

Threats of pollution from surface sources such as those from the disposal of toxic materials are very real and every effort was made to eliminate such sources. By mutual agreement Messrs. Hales Containers ceased to discharge wastes to ground at Ingham and reclamation of recoverable materials was pressed forward. The final sealing of the site will take place in 1974, but monitoring of the site for possible future pollution dangers was under consideration and will almost certainly be introduced shortly.

No. of samples taken	38
No. proving unsatisfactory	8

Advice resulted in improvement in each case.

Nitrate estimation 6. (all satisfactory)
2 samples were submitted from terrapin tanks at schools for evidence of salmonellae etc.

FOOD.

A. Meat Inspection.

The high quality of animals slaughtered at Hopton resulted in little meat being considered unfit but the number of animals slaughtered dropped by some 40%

Cattle	44	Pigs	2
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All animals were inspected.

Poultry inspection is not practical in the district, but a considerable kill takes place. Few birds are drawn.

The introduction of E.E.C. standards would affect the turkey and hen trade very considerably and the "farm gate shop" could be an important development if the requirements are implemented in 1976. Only one processing plant exists in the district for undrawn birds only.

B. Other Foods.

Eleven complaints of unsound food were made to the Department and one concerned mouldy baby food. It was referred to the Borough in which it was purchased for action by them. A total of approximately 1 ton of unsound food mostly in cans was surrendered voluntarily by shopkeepers and wholesalers and disposed of through the pulveriser.

No other formal action was necessary and the general quality of food was good - no doubt due to the increasing cost to the housewife who will not pay superior prices for inferior quality. Certain matters were dealt with resulting in warning letters, particularly troublesome were dirty milk bottles which always seem to cause problems.

C. FOOD PREMISES.

There was little change in the numbers of food premises other than the usual transfer of ownership. One trend has been for factories with canteens to employ contractors to run them rather than employ their own staff. The numbers of food premises by type as at 31st December was as follows:-

General Stores	55	Cafes	5
Sweets and Confections	9	Bakeries	3
Licenced premises	45	School Kitchens	18
Canteens	5	Food Wholesale Warehouses	4
Fish Fryers	3	Nursing Institutions	1
Butchers	9	Milk Distributors	3
Fruit Packers	7	Meals on Wheels Kitchens	2

T H E W O R K I N G E N V I R O N M E N T

A. FACTORIES.

The town expansion programme at Bury St. Edmunds has influenced the growth of factories in the area and the diversification of interests is shown in the following list:-

No of factories on register	113
Other premises registered.....	24
No. of visits paid	174
No. of outworkers notified.....	46

B. OFFICES SHOPS & RAILWAY PREMISES ACT 1963.

The following table indicates the general work which has been carried out. No accidents have been reported or found on inspection to have taken place and no formal action has been necessary. It has not been possible to carry out any detailed assessment of lighting or other standards this year, but such matters are vital to the comfort of workers.

No. of registered premises	90	No. of defects found	92
No. of visits	138	No. of defects remedied	66

C. Agriculture (Safety Health and Welfare Provisions) Act 1956.

A gradual improvement in standards is detectable, but with the further concentration of agricultural labour it is to be expected that good men will only work with good facilities. No numbers are given as they are of no practical significance.

D. DISPOSAL OF INDUSTRIAL AND OTHER WASTE.

The Ingham site received a considerable quantity of both notifiable and non notifiable waste and rapidly filled. The owners installed separation tanks on the site to recover valuable oils and, by request, ceased to tip notifiable wastes towards the end of the year prior to covering. Preliminary talks were held on the possible installation of sophisticated treatment plant for chemical wastes and negotiations were continuing as the year closed. A properly designed and controlled plant is vital to the area - but there will be opposition and apprehension. It is a duty to ensure that all the facts are given at the outset so that the public are reassured and unfounded opposition not based on fact allowed to blur the issue. Then a reasoned and fair decision will be taken by those charged with such duty.

The Knettishall site came into use for the disposal of safe non poisonous waste and was managed in a reasonable manner with full time staff in attendance.

The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds continues to tip at the old sewage works at West Stow and waste from our own pulverisor was deposited in the railway cutting and as cover at Nowton.

T H E R E C R E A T I O N A L E N V I R O N M E N T

A. Open spaces.

The development of the Rampart Field at West Stow has proved popular as did Knettishall Heath. No complaints were received, but the deposition of litter by picnic parties and by travellers taking a snack lunch on attractive verges in the district causes real annoyance to those who care

B. Swim pools and bathing places.

The usual checks on swim pools were carried out, but County Council school pools were checked by County staff. Liaison and joint discussion of problems was to our mutual advantage. The use of rivers for bathing was not as great as in past years except for the very hot spell in August. That was understandable - but not commendable although no known illness resulted.

C. Fairgrounds etc.

Visits were generally paid to fairs and outdoor gatherings. A stand provided by the St. Edmundsbury Council attracted attention at the South Suffolk Show and the Department manned a section which created constant interest. The catering stalls were visited after being written to before the show. This prior notice and advice given proved effective and there was a significant improvement over standards found previously.

D. Tourism and Camping.

The Stanton site came into partial use, but was not fully developed during the year. There were no other developments of any environmental significance to report.

GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

A. Nuisances.

The usual variety of complaints and enquiries were received and the following list of formal complaints were dealt with:-

Noise	11	Offensive smells	16
Infestations	6	Defective drainage	22
Chemical Waste	4	Pools, ditches etc.	6
Other Waste	9	Fumes	4
Caravans	11	Unsound food	11
Water Supplies	11	Smoke	11
Housing defects	34		

A total of 259 complaints and requests for advice were dealt with.

B. Infectious Disease Control and Food Poisoning.

- (1) Scarlet Fever - 2 cases were investigated. No food handlers were involved and both cases were mild.
- (2) Infective Hepatitis - 2 single cases notified were subjected to surveillance but cleared without spread. 6 cases were discovered on a single small estate and investigated. Notifications for 2 of the 6 were eventually received. Close contact could be shown and a probable pattern of cross infection was apparent. Further investigations at work places and a school revealed that other cases had probably been involved, but no further spread took place and all recovered after 2 patients had received hospital treatment. A further case from the same village was removed to Newmarket hospital, but there was no apparent contact with those referred to above.
- (3) Sonne dysentery. - One suspected case was reported of a dining room assistant at a school for subnormal children. No sample was obtainable before recovery and it was thought that this was a non specific organism from which many apparently suffered during the year.
- (4) Salmonellae - One case was confirmed after entry into hospital. Confirmation of phage type 12a was received and the case was discharged to an address outside the district.

A family outbreak occurred following a holiday in Morocco. Results of samples showed that the father and one son gave negative results although both had felt ill on holiday. Three other sons gave positive samples of Sal. paratyphi 3B Vari I. and were treated in St. Helen's Hospital Ipswich with severe illness. The mother also proved

positive, but this was confirmed as sal. kentucky. All recovered and gave consecutive negatives before returning to school.

- (5) Typhoid. - A contact of a known case of typhoid contracted in Cairo was kept under surveillance and tested. He was kept away from school until a series of samples had all proved negative.
- (6) Public Health (Aircraft) Regulations. - Two arrivals in this country without valid Certificates of Vaccination were kept under surveillance but proved fit.

C. Destruction of Pests.

The work continued with our sole operator Mr. Holden and the installation of radio telephone in his van assisted in keeping in constant touch with him saving many miles of travel and enabling late complaints to be passed to him during the day. Warfarin was used almost exclusively for rats with success, but mice proved difficult in the warmer weather. Alphachlorolose proved the only fully effective treatment in the colder weather. It proved of immense value. Traps were resorted to during the summer months as the only effective means of control.

Mr. Holden dealt with 456 complaints in addition to the 27 premises on annual contract.

D. Lectures and demonstrations.

The winter months attracted the usual invitations to address groups of adults and the Department was involved in a school project on pollution. Groups of schoolchildren were shown over the department and the laboratory and a group from Chadacre visited the offices at the end of the year. We were delighted to welcome so many interested members of the younger generation. It is a pity we could not take into the Department the six who wanted to become student health inspectors, but we gave advice to them and trust they eventually obtained suitable posts.

CONCLUSION.

So ends this brief report on the work carried out in 1973. So much more could have been written on the work of the Department, but the reorganisation - which few staff or members really wanted - has been a time consuming master. (One day the life history of Thingoe R.D.C. will be told and I trust that the Health Department will justify it's chapter alongside those relating to all the other vitally important departments to which we remain indebted). To all those officers in other departments - from Chief Officers to juniors - who have also had to undergo this painful metamorphosis and yet have given us every assistance we extend our thanks and best wishes for the future.

F. HOLMES.

